

Keeping America's Food Supply Safe

Imagine a time thousands of years ago before recorded history, when the first farmer scratched in the dirt and planted the first seeds. Ever since that momentous day, agriculture has been in a constant state of evolution. Change is a concept that we rarely like to embrace however, change is inevitable. We might feel better about our changing world if we call it growth, revolution, or transformation. No matter what we want to call it, we live in a constantly changing society. The American agriculturalist is no stranger to change. In order to be successful in today's rapidly advancing world, he must be adaptable. He must arm himself with the knowledge of his shifting surroundings in order to climb above the rest.

Good morning, my name is _____ and I'm representing the _____ County FFA Chapter.

During my generation's lifetime, we have never witnessed America make so many changes and adjustments as it has in the past year and a half. The events of September 11th touched our hearts but left us with a new sense of national insecurity. Our nation is now on guard against madmen who threaten our existence. Not all of us can serve in the military or law enforcement but we must all recognize our responsibilities here at home. The American agriculturalist has the all-important task of keeping the food supply safe from terrorists who endanger the well being of the world's population.

Agriculture is the cornerstone of our American economy. We are a nation that can produce enough food to feed our own country and still export food to the rest of the globe. Agriculture here in America is the most productive food producing system in the world. The US farmer generates more corn per acre, more gallons of milk per cow, and more pork meat per hog than any other place. Therefore, unlike less prosperous countries with subsistence farming, a select few here can produce a bountiful food supply. This frees the majority of our country to pursue things other than putting food on the table. Because food is so easily and readily and cheaply attained, our society can advance through things like industry, art, education, science, exploration and philosophy. The basic and primal call of hunger is answered by a quick trip to the local grocery, restaurant, or farmer's market.

Sadly, America's prosperity and success is what is under attack. Terrorists would love to give the US a devastating blow by attacking our food supply. It is up to the Agriculturalists across this great land to foresee every possibility and prevent every disaster. Charged with this colossal task, you may wonder how we can prevent a terrorist attack on our farms? There are several steps that we can take to help insure the safety of America's essential food supply.

One of the most important things that you can do to prevent an agro-terrorist attack on your farm is to increase your awareness. As our government amplifies its

alertness at our country's borders, we, the farmers, must increase our alertness in our fields. Make sure that you know who your local law enforcement is and how to contact them. Your local authorities should be specifically trained to deal with a biological or chemical attack, including threats to agriculture. In the case of an agro-terrorist attack, they will be your first line of defense and the best hope for the country.

A concerted effort should be made to continually check your livestock and crops for unusual health changes. In Kentucky, our varied and widespread livestock production is considered a possible target for an agro-terrorism attack. After the mad cow disease and foot and mouth disease outbreaks in Europe, our country fortunately made preparations to deal with possible livestock health epidemics. But with the constant threat of terrorism, the danger to our food supply through our animals is a possibility; it can occur. At the first sign of any abnormal health problems in your herd, contact your veterinarian, isolate the sick animals and make careful observations of their food and water supply.

Another important step that you can take to prevent terrorist attacks on your farm is to be bold. Make sure that you know all of your employees. Even though it might sound outlandish, it may be necessary to require background checks on your employees. I feel that we may soon reach a time when background checks before hiring become compulsory. Most businesses now require some form of security check. Since our farms are vulnerable to attack and vital to our survival, we may have to adopt the same safeguards as big business. We need to monitor visitors closely and not hesitate to ask for a photo I.D. We need to establish a system and guidelines that promotes security on our farms. A farm that has higher security standards may look unappealing to a potential terrorist.

Farmers today must be careful to have adequate outside lights and backup energy sources. It might be a good idea to consider adding cameras, alarms, motion detection lights, and other security enhancements. Storage buildings for fertilizer and chemicals require special attention. Farmers have to change the way that they think about their security. In the past, we mainly worried that the unwanted intruder would get hurt or steal something. For the first time we have to consider that they may want to hurt us!

With the ever-present threat of agro-terrorism, it is important for the agriculturalist to be enterprising. The farmer should inspect all feed, chemicals and equipment for signs of tampering. We should all develop alternative water and feed source areas and should stop the practice of storing unprotected supplies all in one area. We should also schedule and monitor all deliveries and maintenance. Remember that terrorists are experts at finding legitimate reasons to "visit" your property.

It is also a good idea to have a plan and to practice what to do in case of an agro terrorism attack. Farm staff should practice emergency operation shutdowns, reporting, quarantine, and evacuation procedures. And again, *everyone* should know the emergency numbers of local law enforcement and health specialists.

As long as we exist, the human society will be constantly changing and evolving. The agriculturist must be prepared to adapt and to anticipate the needed changes. Feeding America is not an easy job but it is a job that can be easily handled by the hard work and ingenuity of America's agricultural community.

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← engages audience

student narrows focus

applies characteristics of the genre

makes connections

continues to narrow focus

depth of analysis

appropriate transitions

← appropriate word choice

control of grammar usage and correctness

demonstrates logical support

breaks down topic to analyze why it is important for farmers to take action

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demonstrates
writers
ability to
discuss
through
analytical
ideas
development

transition
element

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insightful
analysis

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writer
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clear
understanding
of
content
knowledge

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logical, careful
organization
throughout

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appropriate
conclusion